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ARSTRACT

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A survey was made of the reading programs which exist in commercial reading firms, college and university reading centers, and corporations in the United States and Canada. The resulting data, recorded here, are presented so that one may become familiar with the current status of reading improvement programs in both countries. Fifteen tables contain the essence of the questionnaire results. Among the questions asked were Do these courses have any philosophy? How large are the classes? and Is vision checked? The survey revealed that both countries lack adult reading improvement courses which are offered by colleges and universities. This lack of service may contribute to the separation between universities and the cities in which they exist. Tables and references are included. (NH)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS IN INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

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In preparation for an address entitled "Speed Reading: Is the Present Emphasis Desirable?" at the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in Boston in April, 1968, a questionnaire was composed to determine the existing situation regarding programs designed to increase reading rate. In the United States, the questionnaire was mailed to 225 commercial reading firms, whose addresses were obtained from the yellow pages of telephone directories of different parts of the U.S.; 372 college and

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Appreciation is extended to Drs. Margaret Keyser Hill,

H. Alan Robinson, and Nila Banton Smith for their suggestions in regard

to the questionnaire used in this study; to Dr. Marion D. Jenkinson for

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data.

university reading centers, as listed in the Lambuth College Directory (3); and 500 top corporations, as listed in Fortune (4).

The same questionnaire was mailed the following year in Canada to 25 commercial reading firms, 70 colleges and universities,* and 150 top corporations.

Of the 1,088 questionnaires mailed in January, 1968, in the United

States, 292, or 27 per cent, responses were received; these included completed
or partially completed questionnaires and letters from 45 states and the

District of Columbia. Responses came from 53, or 11 per cent of the corporations¹;

48, or 21 per cent of the commercial reading firms; and 191, or 53 per cent of
the college and university reading centers.

Of the 245 questionnaires mailed in April, 1969, in Canada, 83, or 33.9 per cent, responses were received. The breakdown was 39, or 26 per cent of the corporations replied; 8, or 32 per cent of the commercial reading firms; and 36, or 51.4 per cent of the colleges and universities.

Because only a small portion of the data has been presented (1), the purpose of this paper is to record the data obtained from the questionnaire survey so that one may become familiar with the current status of reading improvement programs in the United States and Canada.

The following questions and tables contain the essence of the questionnaire results.



^{*}Questionnaires were sent to colleges and Universities in Canada because there are relatively few Reading Centers in Canada in contrast to the large number in the United States.

Respondents from many corporations noted that they refer employees to commercial reading firms, or to colleges and universities, instead of staffing a reading program.

Do These Courses Have Any Philosophy?

Various statements concerning philosophy of reading were included with returned questionnaires. Many of these statements were somewhat general (e.g., "reaching potential of students," etc.). Nevertheless, of the U.S. responses and 36 Canadian responses to the statement, "we have a basic philosophy," respectively, 180, or 89 per cent, and 26, or 72.2 per cent, replied affirmatively. Table 1 indicates that commercial reading firms and colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada tend to have philosophies.

Insert Table 1 Here

How is "Speed Reading" Defined?

The questionnaire contained the following statement to be completed:
"A definition of speed reading that most clearly fits the objectives of our
program is:". A multiplicity of responses were received, as indicated in
Table 2. (The first five responses were listed on the questionnaire; the
others were written in by the respondents.) As indicated, corporations,
firms, and universities in U.S. and Canada prefer "efficiency of reading."

Insert Table 2 Here

Who Takes the Reading Improvement Courses?

In U.S., the corporations tend to have a greater percentage of college educated adults, whereas in Canada they tend to have a greater percentage of high school graduates. Regarding the commercial reading firms, college

educated adults are the largest "market" in both countries.

Of particular interest here is that a greater percentage of Canadian college students than U.S. college students take commercial reading courses; this pattern is also true among businessmen and professional people. One interpretation is that few Canadian colleges and universities have reading improvement programs. This interpretation is substantiated by the data indicating that in neither country do colleges and universities seem to service the reading needs of the general public including professional and businessmen.

Insert Table 3 Here

How Large Are the Classes?

Table 4 reveals the range and median class size of reading improvement programs in U.S. and Canada.

Insert Table 4 Here

What is the Total Number of Hours Spent in Classroom Instruction During the Whole Course?

The corporations in U.S. and Canada tend to have a similar median number of total classroom hours of instruction. The commercial reading firms in U.S., however, have more total median hours of instruction than do those in Canada, and the colleges and universities in U.S. have considerably more total median hours of instruction than do those in Canada.

Insert Table 5 Here



What Kinds of Materials and Equipment are Used?

A wide array of materials is used; respondents mentioned records, tapes, films, filmstrips, transparencies, overhead projectors, reading kits, accelerators, tests, tachistoscopes, workbooks, charts, maps, games, books, multi-sensory materials, manuals, and experience reports.

Machines are widely used. Some respondents, however, specified restrictions for such use; e.g., "during first three weeks," or "first twenty minutes of class time."

Table 6 indicates that the tachistoscope is the favorite for group instruction in U.S. and Canadian corporations, whereas, for individuals, controlled pacers are favored. Commercial reading firms and colleges and universities have a similar pattern as the corporations, with commercial firms making increased use of textbooks.

Insert	Table	6 Here	

Who Teaches the Course?

Table 7 reveals that 21 Ph.D. degree holders are actively involved in teaching these courses in the U.S. (mostly in universities),

Insert Table 7 Here

Is Vision Checked?

Routine vision checks are reported in 94 programs in U.S., and six noted that vision is checked when requested by student, parent or teacher. Five commercial firms in U.S. recommend a private eye examination for all



students; one requires proof of a recent examination.

Approximately twice the percentage of U.S. commercial reading firms and colleges and universities have vision checks in comparison to the percentages in Canada.

Insert Table 8 Here

What Kinds of Instruments are Used to Check Vision?

Table 9 indicates that the Keystone Telebinocular is the most popular instrument used to check vision in reading improvement courses.

Insert Table 9 Here

Is There Any Pre-Testing of Reading Skills?

Pre-testing is reported by

of those responding in U.S. and Canada. Over 90 different ways were mentioned.

Tests indicated as most popular were The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, the

Cooperative English Tests, EDL Reading Versatility Tests, and various forms

of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, Science Research Associates (SRA) Tests,

Gates Reading Survey, and teacher-made tests, including informal reading inventories.

Table 10 indicates that more than 90 per cent of the commercial reading firms and colleges and universities in U.S. and Canada give pre-tests. Regarding corporations, 73.8% in U.S. and 100% in Canada have pre-tests in their programs.

Insert Table 10 Here



What is Done in the Last Session?

There appears to be a greater variety of things occurring at the last session of reading improvement courses in corporations, commercial firms, and colleges and universities in U.S. Table 11 contains these data.

Insert Table 11 Here

What Are the Rate Goals?

Respondents were asked to complete the following statement: "The reading rate that we have as a goal for our students is: " Specific rates mentioned ranged from a minimum of 25 wpm to a maximum of 18,000 wpm. median of the minimum was 600; the median of the maximum, 900. Many respondents chose to qualify the above rates by specifying the types of material for which a particular speed was intended, such as 600-900 wpm for newspapers, or popular magazines; 300 wpm for textbooks. Others stated a rate and added "for skimming only." Many chose not to set a specific numerical rate; 29 respondents preferred an individualized rate. Some specified that basic reading skills must have reached an acceptable level before there could be any stress on rate. Many preferred to state the rate goal in terms of doubling or tripling the starting rate while some stated the aim was only for improvement of rate. Further qualification came from those who stressed that speed is variable and must be adjusted to individual skills, material, and purpose. In Canada, goals in corporations and colleges and universities did not exceed, respectively, 900 and 1500 wpm. The goal was 5,000 words a minute for one commercial reading firm in Canada.



Are These Gains Maintained after Student Has Left the Class?

Generally, respondents indicated that gains are maintained. They cited follow-up studies, post-testing months after course completion, or conferences with students, parents, or teachers.

Insert Table 12 Here

How Is Rate Measured?

Most respondents measured rate by "number of words per minute" while some used "number of words dealt with per minute." The Effective Rate, which is referred to as the Reading Index by the Educational Development Laboratories (EDL) and others, is also used. Other ways indicated by individual respondents included "number of pages read in a given time," "percentile on the Iowa Test," "percentile on the Cooperative Test," "time to read a given chapter," "time to read an entire book," "reduction of time spent on reading," "maintenance of comprehension at an 80 per cent level or speed is not stressed," and the use of "gross and effective rates." A few said they did not measure rate. No respondent mentioned measuring rate by number of syllables. Table 13 provides information on rate measurement.

Insert Table 13 Here

What Are the Comprehension Goals?

Respondents generally expressed concern for adequate comprehension.

The majority of programs in U.S. and Canadian corporations, commercial



reading firms, and colleges and universities aim for 70 to 90 per cent comprehension.

Some respondents indicated that comprehension varies with individuals, materials, and purpose. Ways of measuring comprehension included quizzes, standardized tests, teacher-made tests, group discussions, outlines, summaries, and major ideas.

Insert Table 14 Here

Is Any Relationship Made to Study Skills?

More emphasis is placed on study skills in reading improvement programs in Canadian corporations, about the same emphasis is given in commercial reading firms in both U.S. and Canada, and more emphasis is given in U.S. colleges and universities, as indicated in Table 15.

Insert Table 15 Here

Conclusion

The findings of this survey are in line with those obtained in the survey made by Geerlofs and Kling (2). It is encouraging to observe certain practices. One is the use of the vision check. Another is the use of more formal testing procedures before and after instruction. A third practice that is encouraging relates to the cooperation extended by corporations, commercial reading firms, and college and universities in providing information about their programs for this study. Cooperation of this nature will lead to increased communication and through communication there will come a clearer understanding of the problems and the realization of their solutions.

One area of neglect revealed by this survey concerns the general public. Relatively few colleges and universities provide a reading improvement service for adults. This relative lack of service may in part reflect the current emphasis upon research and training in many institutions of higher education, contributing, perhaps, to the separation between "town and gown" in many cities.

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- 3. Helms, Walter E. A Directory of College and University Reading Clinics/ <u>Centers in the United States</u>, 1966-67. Jackson, Tennessee: Lambuth College, 1967.
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TABLE I PHILOSOPHY OF READING

	Unite	United States	ites		Can	Canada		
	Number	er	Per Cent	ent	Number	oer .	Per Cent	nt I
	Yes	No	Yes	No		No	Yes	%
Corporations	6	60	52.9	47.1	2	4	33.4	66.6
©mmercial Reading Firms	36	8	95	5	0	_	90.9	7.
Colleges and Universities	135	<u>e</u>	6	6	14	7.7	73.7	26.3

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TABLE 2
DEFINITION OF SPEED READING

Reading Firms

Corporations

Commercial

•.	j	U. S.	3	an.)	i. S.	S	Can.	
	N O	82	No.	%	No.	8	No.		
Increasing rate of reading	0		0			21	2	10.5	
Increasing flexibility of reading	•	5.5	7	25	2	43	6	15.8	
Increasing efficiency of reading	2	27.7	4	20	7	44.7	2	37	
Increasing rate of comprehension		5.5	8	22	4	8,5	m	5.8	,
All of above	7	=				14.9	0		•
* Other	6	22	0.		2	25.5	4	7	
					_				

*Other definitions include various combinations of the above definitions, with the colleges and universities giving particular emphasis to the idea of flexibility.

Colleges and Universities

(Table 2 continued)

U.	S.	C	an.	•
No.	%	No.	%	
No. 3	1.9	3	10	•
17	10.9	6	20	•
49	30.8	16	53. 4	:
25	16. 4	.3	.10	
ţı	6.9			
54	33. 9	2	6, 6	
	1	1	1	

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TABLE 3
WHO TAKES THE READING IMPROVEMENT COURSES?

	3	rpor	Corporations		,	Commercial Reading Firm	Commercial Reading Firms	
2	No. U. S.	. %	San.	85	 	8	Can.	**************************************
	ì	25			r.	73	-	7 6
	~	2.5			%	20 6		
. 9	25		9	42.9	3 ∝	277	. «	2 N
15		38	4	28.6	23	21.1	, 6	21.9
0					r,	4.3	4	9.8
=	21	27.5	4	28.6	22	1.61	7	21
0					72	43	0	
	7	2.5			0			
0			· ·		m	26	0	
0					4	3.5	4	9.8
0					0			•
0						٥.	m	7.3
0						6.		
2	12.5				0			
				•		•		•

Colleges and (Table 3 continued)
Universities

	01111	31 311103		
No.	U. S.	Can % No.	• %	•
18	5. 5	0		
60	18.5	4	11.4	
51	15.8	4	11.4	
72 ·	22. 2	12	34.3	
75	23. 2	7	20	
41	12.6	7	20	
0		0		
0		0		
5	1.5	1	2.9	٠
0	,			•
2	.6			
0	٠			
0				
			,	

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TABLE 4 CLASS SIZE

ratior ercia	U. S.	orporations I to 25 persons	Commercial Reading Firms 1 to 30 persons	Alleges and Universities 1 to 100 persons
-----------------	-------	-----------------------------	--	---

s Size	Can.	14 24 26
Median Class Size	u. s.	20 10 16
	Can.	I to 25 persons I2 to 30 persons I0 to ,150 persons
Range of Class Size	U. S.	I to 25 persons I to 30 persons I to 100 persons

HOURS SPENT IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION TABLE 5

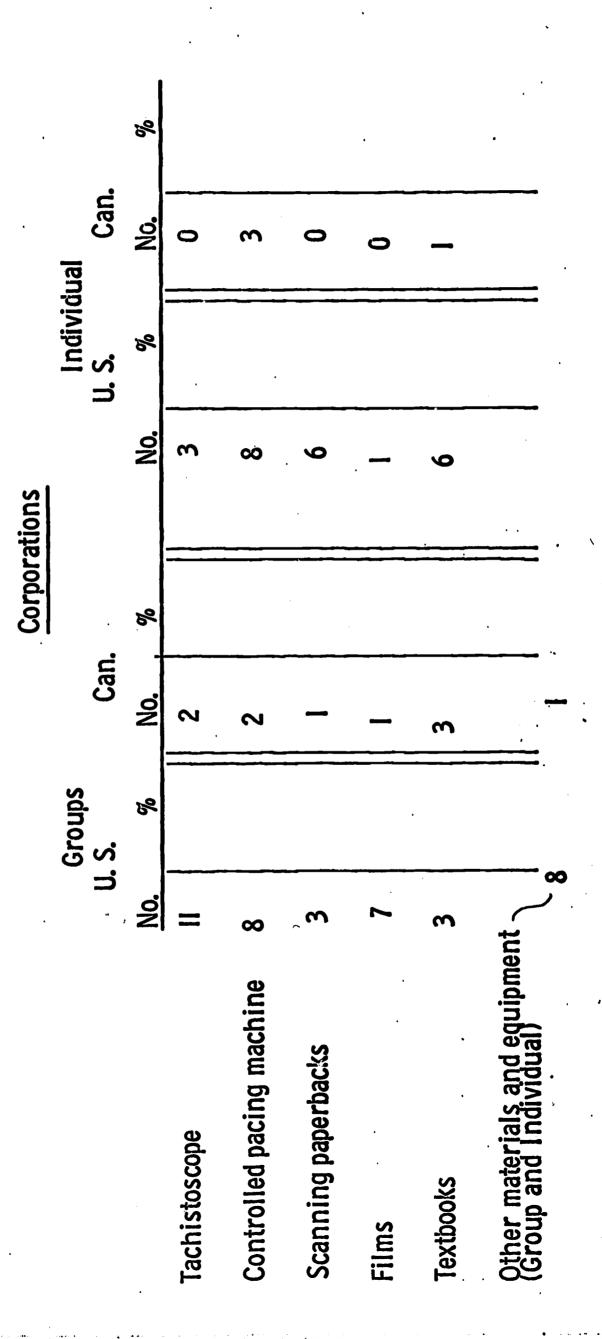
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	Ran Total Class	Range of Class Hours	Median of Total Class Hours	an of ss Hours
	U. S	Can.	u. S.	Can.
crporations	6 to 48	4 to 40	20	∞
commercial Reading Firms	10 to 100	2 to 30	24	6
colleges and Universities	5 to 140	2 to 30	98	=

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TABLE 6
MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE



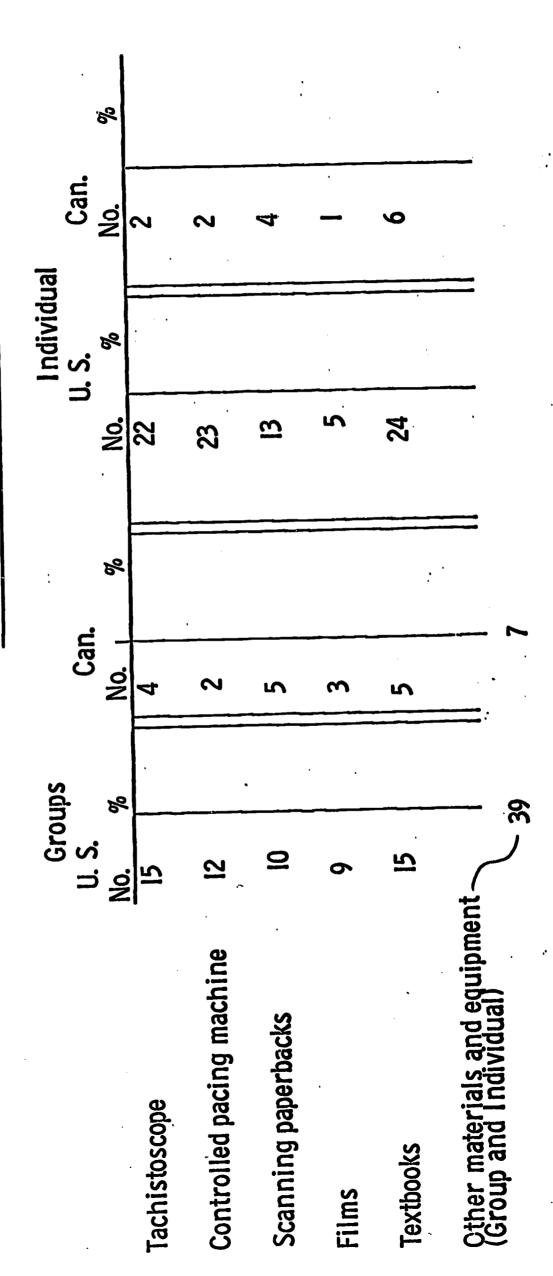
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TABLE 6 Cont

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE

Commercial Reading Firms



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TABLE 6 Cont MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT USAGE

Colleges and Universities

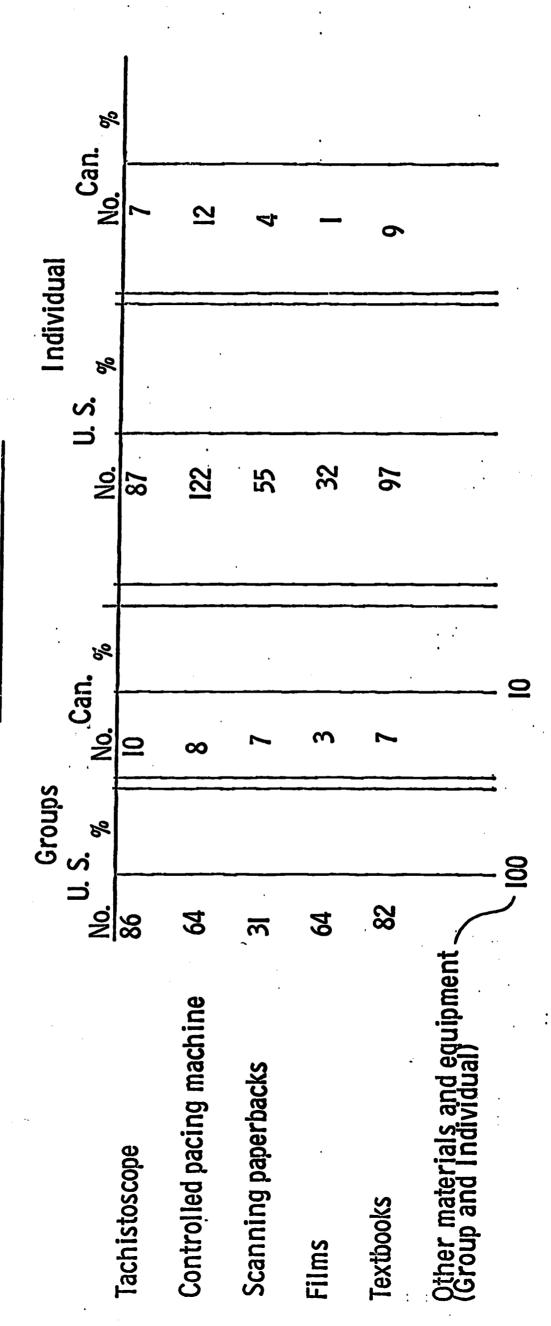


TABLE 7
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF INSTRUCTORS

	٠	Corporations	ons		C	Commercial Reading Firms	l ms	•	1
	, i	U. S.	S	Can.	U. S.	S.	Can.	ے	l
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	1
College educated	2	22.7			7	65	4	23.5	
College graduates	2	22.7	4	3	28	26.2	7	42.1	
Holders of master!s degrees in subjects other than reading	9	27.3			ß	21.5	8	17.6	
Holders of master's degrees in reading	m	13.5			22	9.6	-	5.9	
Holders of Ph. D. degrees in subjects other than reading	, o				8	6.1		,	
Holders of Ph. D. degrees in reading	0				2	6.1		•	
Participants in a special training program	m	13.5			23	21.5	2	11.7	
Holders of a specialist's certificate in reading	0					. 93		•	
Holder of a six-year specialist diploma	0				0				
			٠.						

Colleges and (Table 7 continued)
Universities

U	. S.	C	an.	•	
No.	%	No.	%	•	
23	9. 2	١	5.3		
57	22.8	6	31.6		
64	25:6	9	47.3	•	
87	34. 9	2	11. 1		
, 8	3.2		·	•	
9 .	3.6			•	
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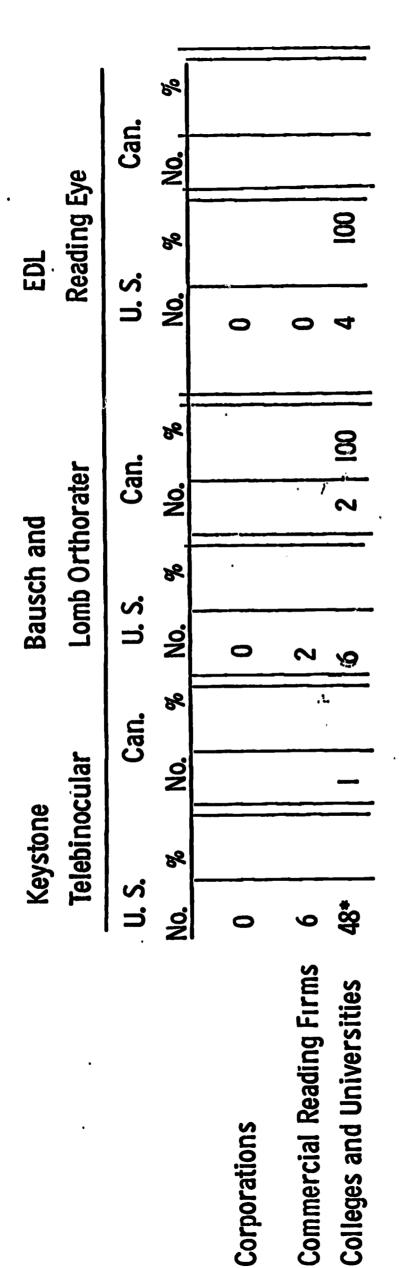
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TABLE 8 NUMBER WHO GIVE VISION CHECKS

	u. s.	YES S.	s Can.	ď	j	NO U. S.	Can.	_•	Recommend Private Checks	lin Special Cases or on Reques
	<u>8</u>	%	SS.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Corporations	-	5.5	0	•	12	94.4	9	8	O ,	0
Commercial Reading Firms 15	5	42.9	8	53	8	57.1	6	22	i.	
Colleges and Universities	82	51.3	4	21.2	74	48.7	5	72.1	6	6

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TABLE 9 KINDS OF VISION CHECKS USED



*In addition to these 48, nine respondents to the question, "Is Vision Checked?" mentioned they used the Keystone Telebinocular upon teacher. parent, or student reminest or when there is an ability and the

test used do Rot total the same figures used in Table 8 because some respondents replied Note. Totals of test used do not total the same figures used in Table 8 b affirmatively to the question but declined to name the test used. (Takke & continued)

of T				ners	-		
U. S.	C	an.	U. S	5.	Can.		
No.	% No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	,
1			0				
0			6		2	50	•
7			9		2	.50	

TABLE 10 NUMBER WHO GIVE A READING PRE-TEST

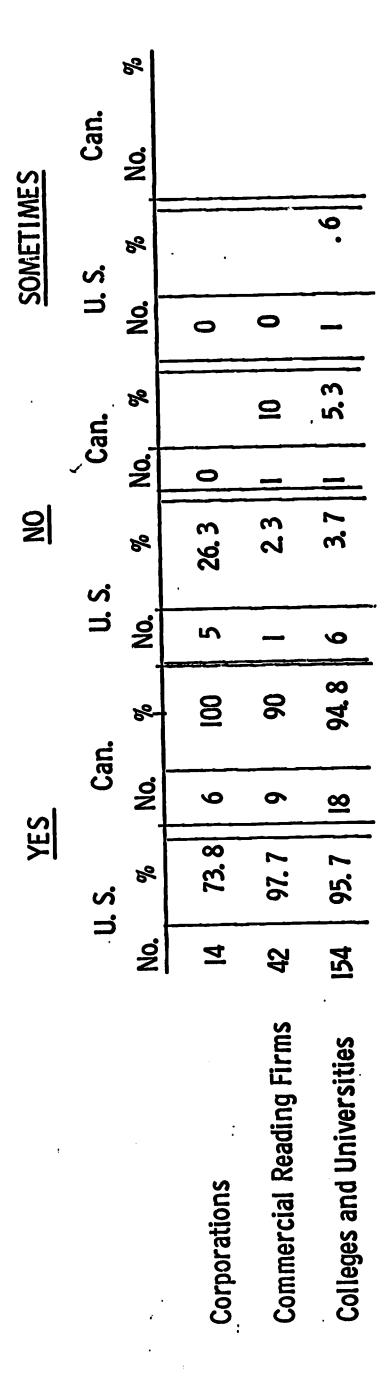




TABLE 11

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•				:								
	COUR	COURSE CONTENT OF LAST	ENT C		CLAS: Q	CLASS MEETING Commercial Reading Firms	ing Sial		Coll	Colleges and Universities	~ o	
	1	U. S.,	No.	%	No. S.	%	Can.	الة الا	No. U.	U. S. %	Can. %	· %
Post testing	4	21.2	5	45.5	<u></u>	20 6	60	28.6	21	10.9		31.5
Discussion of post-testing results	~	1.5	m	27.2	=	17.4	60	28.6	2	و -	\o	17.4
Suggestions for continuations on own	 i	5.3	m.	27.2	9	25.4	6	32.5	্ ম	12.8	60	
All of above	∞	42.			91	25.4			4	25.0		
Post testing and discussion of results	0				0		an a		ದ	6.7		
Discussion of Post-testing results and suggestions for continuation on own	0			, ··	0	·			×	20.7		
Post testing ans suggestions for continuation on own	. 0				0	·			2	10.9		
, Other	4	21.2				11.2	<u> </u>	10.7	=	6.7	, rv	143
		,				:	_					

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TABLE 12
RETENTION OF GAINS IN READING RATES

	>	Yes			So	Sometimes			7	Usually		·
	U. S.	S	Can.	<u> </u>	U. S.	s,	Can.	7	j	U. S.	Can	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	8	No.	%	No.	ES 1
Corporations	9	55.5	4	08	2	=	<u> </u>	•	0			
Commercial Reading Firms	35	81.5	2	8	2	4.7				2.3		
Colleges and Universities	5	66.4	2	8	m	2.2			٠	3.6		
		`				•	·		·			

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TABLE 12 Cont RETENTION OF GAINS IN READING RATES

		Do Not Know	Know			Not at Peak	sak		2		O	Generally Not	al()	Not
		U.S.	Can.		J.	S.	Can.		U.S.	Can.		U.S.		ဒ
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No. 9	% . N	No. %	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Corporations	2	27.8			0				5.6	-	20	0		
Commercial Reading Firms	m	6.9			0				4.7	0		0	•	
Colleges and Universities	8	22.6			2	ထ တံ		9	4.4	2	14.3	<u></u>	. 7	
								==						

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TABLE 13
METHODS OF MEASURING RATE

		Corporations	ations		Reg	Commercial Reading Firms	ercial irms		Coll	Colleges and Universities	-	
·	U. S.	rá	Can.		U. S.		Can.		U. S.		Can	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Nimber of words per minite		2	•	× × ×	77	8	O	23	071	20	7	. 0
specification of permittees		3	>	3	ţ	3	0	; ;	3	70	2	60
Number of words dealt with per minute	. 0			14.3	6	23	2	<u>13.3</u>	91	& 6		7.
Number of syllables	0	•			0				Ö			
Other	0				4	9.8	īÜ	33.3	'n	~		ار. 11
	•	-	•	-	- .	_	-	-	-	-	-	

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TABLE 14 COMPREHENSION GOALS

Per Cent of Comprehension	Corporations	ations	Commercial Reading Firms	Commercial eading Firms	Colleges ar Universities	Colleges and niversities
	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.	U. S.	Can.
50 to 59	-		0	·	0	
60 to 69	0		4		6	2
70 to 79	1	_	=		.	∞
80 to 89	2	2	7	_	42	·. 9
90 to 100	2		7	_	91	m
60 to 79	0		0		. 0	
70 to 89	0		0		r.	,
80 to 100	0		_		9	•
65 to 85	_		0		0	
75 to 100	-		0		_	
70 to 100	_		4		'n	
Strive for individual improvement	m		_		.	
Comprehension goals vary with material, purpose, and individual reader	0	•	-		7	•

TABLE 15 STUDY SKILL RELATIONSHIP

	%	16.7		5.8
	Can.	_		m
NO	%	29. 4	2.3	2.5
	U.S.	5		4
3				
	%	83. 4	8	84.2
	Can. %	5	6	16 84.2
: XES				